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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, IRMO/IPCC, NCT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (U) SENIOR PUK LDR ON UNIFICATION, BAGHDAD TALKS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Scott Dean, Regional Coordinator (Acting), Reo  
Kirkuk, Department of State .  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: On February 7, RC(A) met with Kosrat Rasul, the Executive Secretary of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's (PUK's) politburo. Rasul discussed the unification of the two Kurdistan Regional Governments (KRGs) and national political developments in Baghdad. He said that KRG-Sulaymaniyah Prime Minister Omar Fattah would accept the unified KRG deputy prime minister post and laid out difficulties in unifying sensitive ministries. He also said that the PUK leaders would meet soon to decide whether to put off KRG unification until Iraq had formed a new government in Baghdad.  
END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(SBU) FATTAH WILL ACCEPT KRG DEPUTY PM JOB  
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¶2. (C) On the unification of the two KRGs, Kosrat Rasul said:

-- The PUK politburo will meet with Talabani in Baghdad on February 9 to discuss unification and the formation of the central government. One issue it will decide is whether the PUK needs to wait until a new central government is formed before naming a KRG deputy PM and going forward with unification.

-- The details of the KRG's unification plan have been agreed upon.

-- KRG-Sulaymaniyah Prime Minister Omar Fattah has been asked to be the deputy prime minister of the unified KRG, a majority (READ: not including me) of the PUK politburo supports his candidacy and he will accept the post.

-- Unification of the Asayish, ministries of finance, interior, justice and Peshmerga affairs will take time because the two KRGs' systems are different in these areas. For example, our Asayish are under our ministry of interior whereas President Barzani's son runs theirs. The committee to resolve this will be created after unification begins. This committee will have to insure that hiring and promotion is based on merit, not party loyalties. Also, we have made more changes to our legal system than they have. With the Peshmerga, it is necessary to retire the older ones and recruit younger men equally. The same goes for the Asayesh and the police. That said, unifying the Asayish and Peshmerga is possible if Barzani acts as a president of Kurdistan instead of as a KDP leader.

-- But the political obstacles to unification, e.g., the lack of trust, are greater than the technical ones.

-- Everyone's authority should be limited. Barzani and Talabani are above the law in Kurdistan and that should change so that their powers are limited, democracy is established here, there is transparency in the budget, officeholders do not keep power forever and elections decide who holds power. I will never support a dynastic system. The current government formation negotiations in Baghdad and over KRG unification are not affecting the pace towards reform in Kurdistan one way or the other.

-- The U.S. should support democracy in Kurdistan, not any particular party in the KRG.

-- I will tell the KRG-S Ministry of Interior to cooperate with you on the detainee issue.

(SBU) BAGHDAD NEGOTIATIONS  
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13. (C) Turning to the state of play in the formation of a new Iraqi government, Rasul said:

-- The Shiite parties still disagree among themselves over who should be prime minister. They will decide this February 11.

-- Formation of the new government will take longer than the previous government because of this government's greater importance.

-- Problems in forming the government and continued insecurity in Iraq will impede our plans in Kurdistan.

-- The Baathists are causing insecurity in a bid for more leverage over the negotiations for a new government and because

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of the Saddam trial.

(U) COMMENT  
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14. (C) Some say that how much the PUK and KDP each get in the central government negotiations vis a vis the other may affect the KRG unification negotiations. Rasul probably supports Arsalan Baiz to be KRG deputy PM, but apparently expects to lose that fight. We see no rush to unify the key KRG ministries.  
DEAN